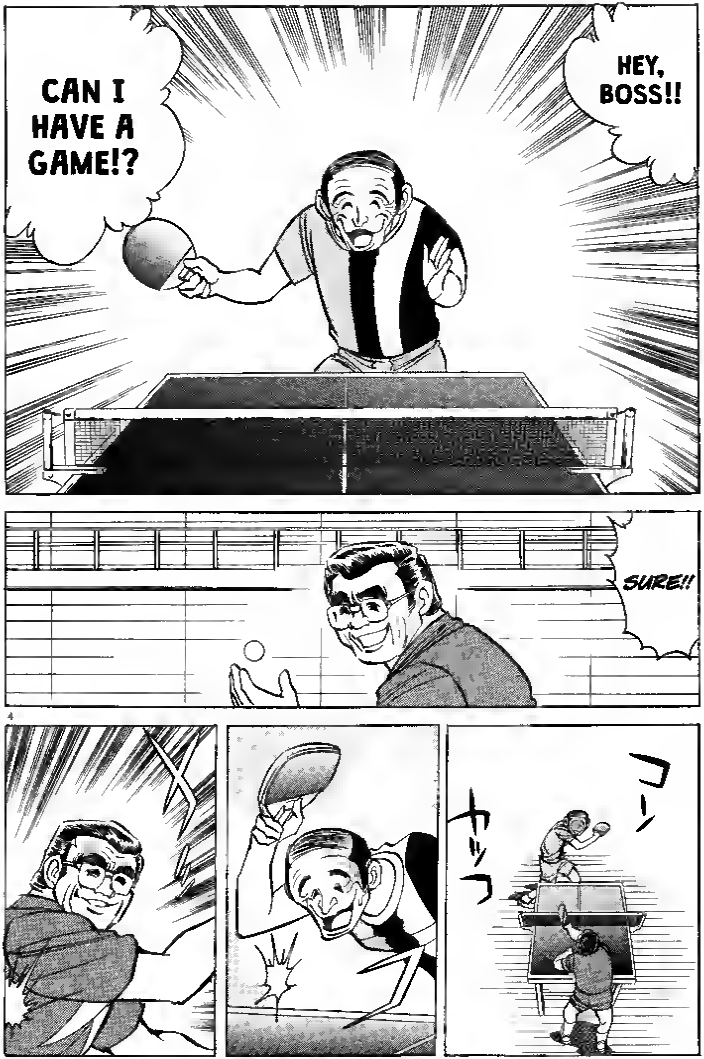
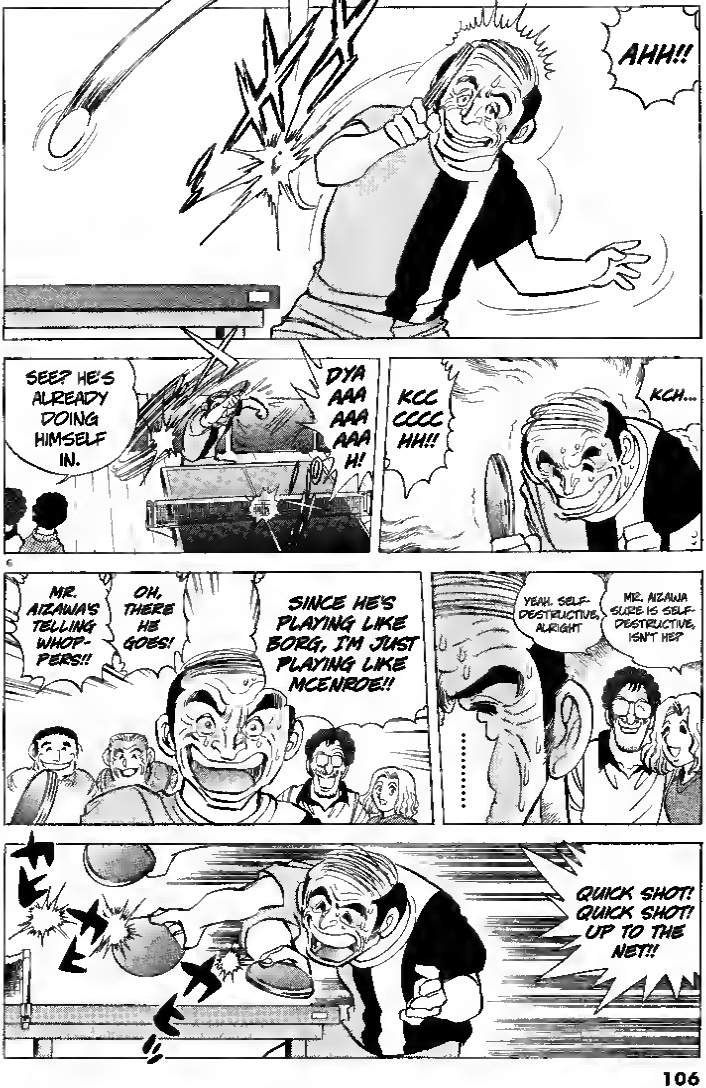
CHAPTER 4: THE MEN WHO RISK THEIR LIVES ON PING-PONG

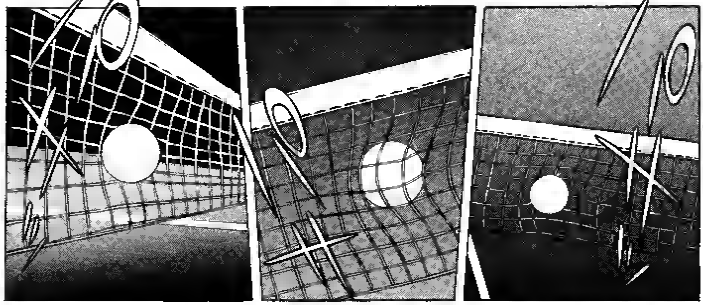
LIFE IS LIKE A RIVER.
IT STARTS AS A TINY STREAM...
BUT LITTLE BY LITTLE,
IT BE-COMES A BIGGER AND MORE FORCEFUL CURRENT...
UNTIL IT EVENTUALLY LEADS TO THE GREAT SEA.

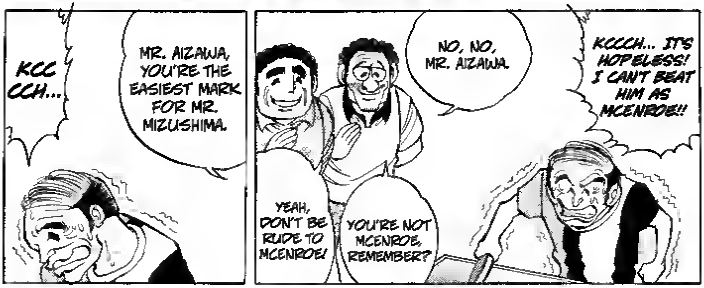
THERE IS AN EVEN GREATER CURRENT AWAITING THOSE IN THE PRIME OF LIFE!!
BUT THE CURRENT DOES NOT STOP THERE.
PING-PONG BOSS
CHAPTER 4: THE MEN WHO RISK THEIR LIVES ON PING-PONG

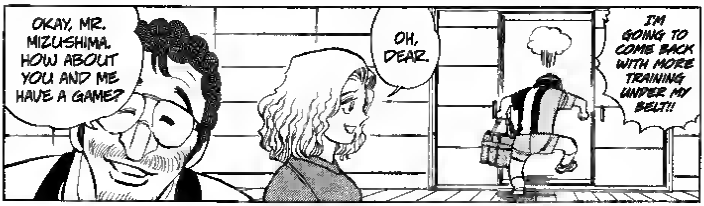

CAN I HAVE A GAME!?
HEY, BOSS!!
SURE!!
コーン
カッコ

CIVIC GYM-NASIUM
KCH.
HUFF HUFF HUFF
AHHHHHHH!!
AHHHH...
AHHHH!
AND HIS OPPONENT, MR. AIZAWA, IS ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE TO THAT STYLE.
HE MAKES ACCURATE RETURNS, AND WAITS FOR HIS OPPONENT TO SLIP UP.
OH, NO, NOT REALLY.
YOU PLAY JUST LIKE BJORN BORG IN TENNIS!
BOSS, YOU SURE KNOW HOW TO MAKE GOOD RETURNS!!

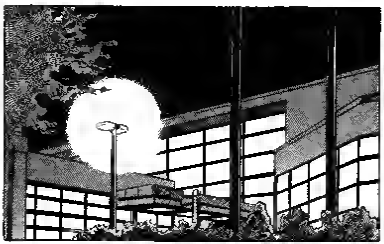

AHH!!
SEE? HE'S ALREADY DOING HIMSELF IN.
DYA AAA AAA AAA H!
KCC CCCC HH!!
KCH...
MR. AIZAWA'S TELLING WHOPPERS!!
OH, THERE HE GOES!
SINCE HE'S PLAYING LIKE BORG, I'M JUST PLAYING LIKE MCENROE!!
YEAH. SELF-DESTRUCTIVE, ALRIGHT
MR. AIZAWA SURE IS SELF-DESTRUCTIVE, ISN'T HE?
.....
QUICK SHOT! QUICK SHOT! UP TO THE NET!!

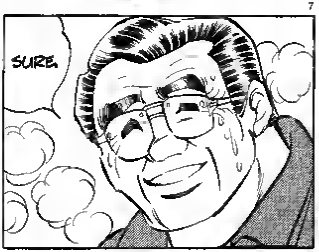


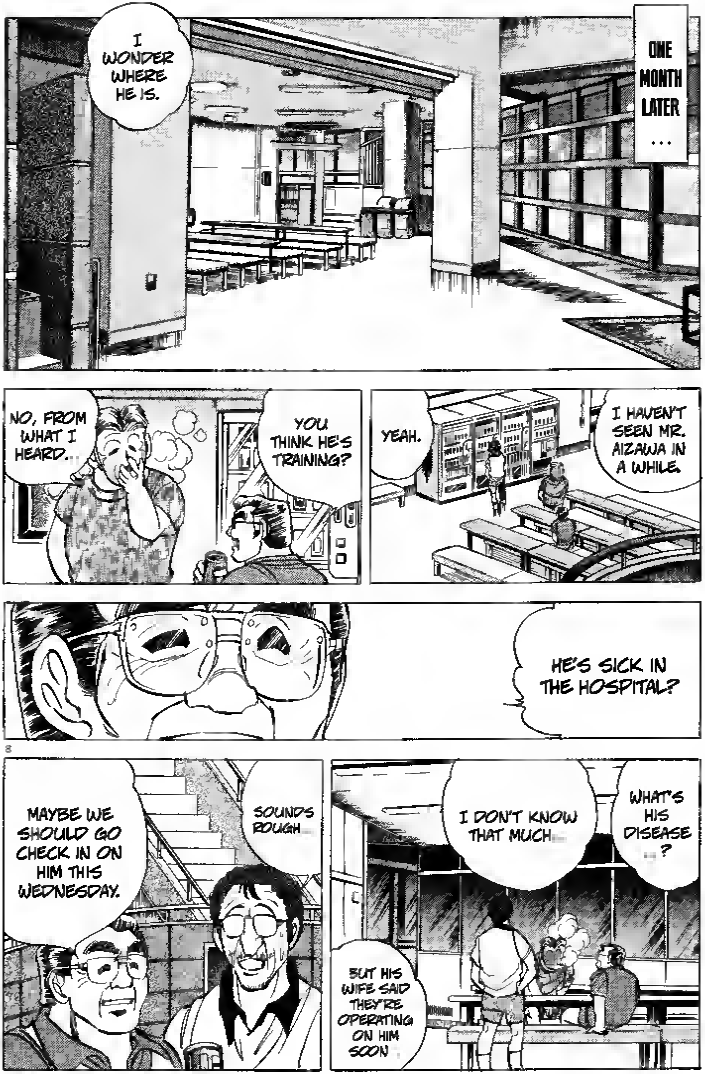

KCC CCH...
MR. AIZAWA, YOU'RE THE EASIEST MARK FOR MR. MIZUSHIMA.
NO, NO, MR. AIZAWA.
KCCCH... IT'S HOPELESS! I CAN'T BEAT HIM AS MCENROE!!
YEAH, DON'T BE RUDE TO MCENROE!
YOU'RE NOT MCENROE, REMEMBER?

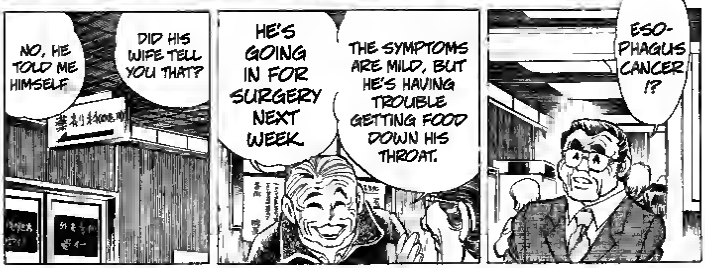

OKAY, MR. MIZUSHIMA. HOW ABOUT YOU AND ME HAVE A GAME?
OH, DEAR.
I'M GOING TO COME BACK WITH MORE TRAINING UNDER MY BELT!!

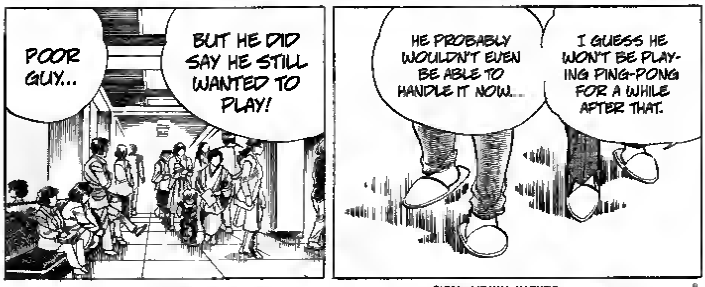
7



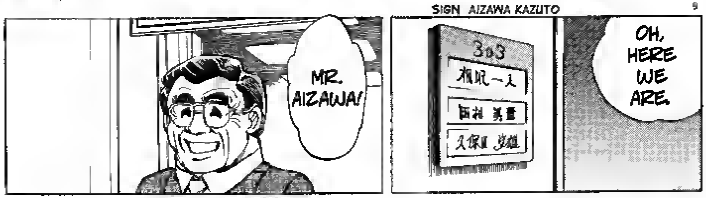

SURE.


ONE MONTH LATER ...
I WONDER WHERE HE IS.
I HAVEN'T SEEN MR. AIZAWA IN A WHILE.
YEAH.
YOU THINK HE'S TRAINING?
NO, FROM WHAT I HEARD...
HE'S SICK IN THE HOSPITAL?
WHAT'S HIS DISEASE ...?
I DON'T KNOW THAT MUCH...
BUT HIS WIFE SAID THEY'RE OPERATING ON HIM SOON
SOUNDS ROUGH...
MAYBE WE SHOULD GO CHECK IN ON HIM THIS WEDNESDAY.


NO, HE TOLD ME HIMSELF.
DID HIS WIFE TELL YOU THAT?
HE'S GOING IN FOR SURGERY NEXT WEEK.
THE SYMPTOMS ARE MILD, BUT HE'S HAVING TROUBLE GETTING FOOD DOWN HIS THROAT.
ESO-PHAGUS CANCER!?


POOR GUY...
BUT HE DID SAY HE STILL WANTED TO PLAY!
HE PROBABLY WOULDN'T EVEN BE ABLE TO HANDLE IT NOW...
I GUESS HE WON'T BE PLAY-ING PING-PONG FOR A WHILE AFTER THAT.

SIGN AIZAWA KAZUTO



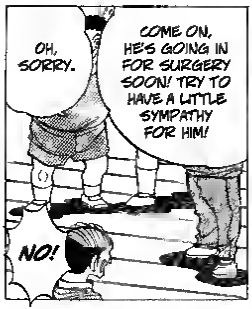
COME OUT AND PLAY ME!!
WHERE ARE YOU, MIZU-SHIMA!?

11

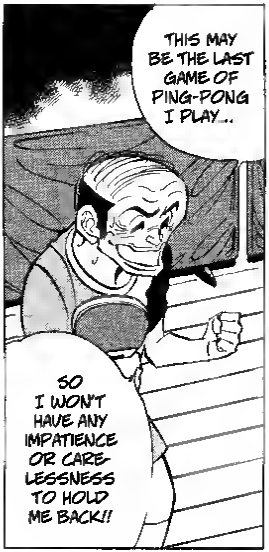
I WON'T BE ABLE TO PLAY PING-PONG FOR A WHILE AFTER MY SURGERY, SO I'LL TAKE HIM DOWN BEFORE THAT!
S YS YOU!
THAT'S ALL FINE AND DANDY, BUT DO YOU HAVE A STRATEGY FOR TAKING HIM DOWN?

WHAT...? SO HE CAN PLAY A GAME WITH ME?
J-J. .JUST COME HERE AS SOON AS YOU CAN!

.....

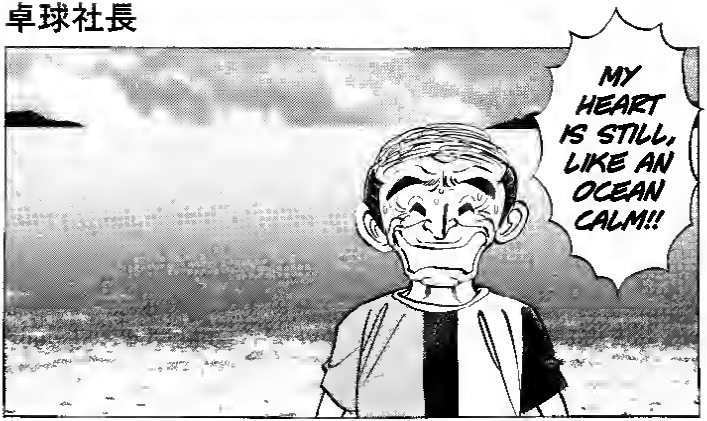

COME ON, HE'S GOING IN FOR SURGERY SOON! TRY TO HAVE A LITTLE SYMPATHY FOR HIM!
OH, SORRY.
NO!

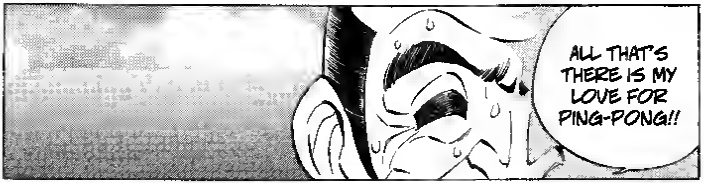
I DON'T
N...
NO...
THEN YOU'LL JUST LOSE LIKE YOU DO EVERY TIME.
THERE'S NO POINT IN EVEN TRYING.


THIS MAY BE THE LAST GAME OF PING-PONG I PLAY...
SO I WON'T HAVE ANY IMPATIENCE OR CARE-LESSNESS TO HOLD ME BACK!!

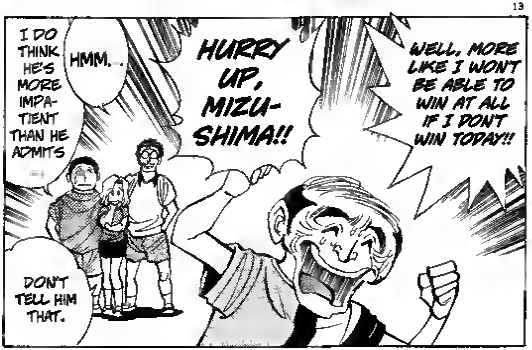
UP UNTIL NOW, I'VE BEEN SELF-DESTRUCTING, NOT BECAUSE OF MY SKILL, BUT BECAUSE OF MY WEAK WILLPOWER...
BUT NOT TODAY !!

THIS TIME, IT'LL BE DIFFER-ENT!


MY HEART IS STILL, LIKE AN OCEAN CALM!!


ALL THAT'S THERE IS MY LOVE FOR PING-PONG!!

I GUESS YOU'VE GOT A POINT!!
HMM ...
SO I MIGHT JUST BE ABLE TO WIN THIS TIME!!


I DO THINK HE'S MORE IMPA-TIENT THAN HE ADMITS
HMM...
HURRY UP, MIZU-SHIMA!!
WELL, MORE LIKE I WON'T BE ABLE TO WIN AT ALL IF I DON'T WIN TODAY!!
DON'T TELL HIM THAT.

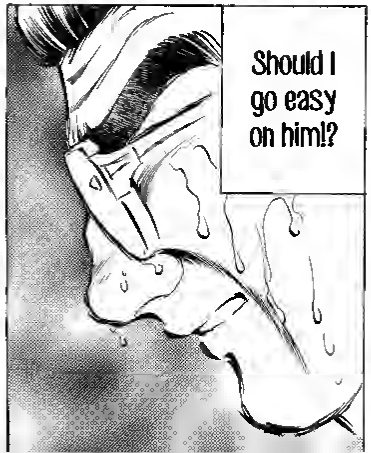
Should I win!?
What do I do!? Can I win?
But chances are, I'll win if I play him...
A man who won't be able to play ping-pong for a while after his operation is challenging me...
What should I do...?

15

A handi-cap!!
I know! I'll put certain conditions on myself just for today's game!!

I can't go easy!!
No, that would be an insult to the man who snuck out of the hospital just to play me... I

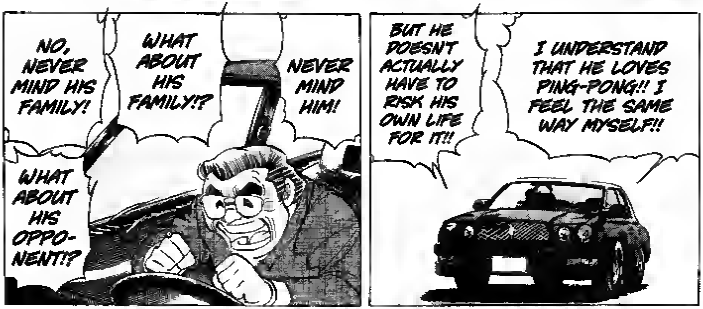
14


Should I go easy on him!?

How do I face it!?
This is the final challenge of a man who may never play ping-pong again...

There shouldn't be any problems if I'm just putting "conditions" on myself!!
1) Use only my forehand, and never use my backhand!
2) Never hit the ball to Mr. Aizawa at full force!!
...These two should do it!!
ヴォォォォ
AL-RIGHT!
キキィィィィ
ゴォォォ
What do I do...!? And why is he challenging now of all times, anyway...? What did I ever do to him!?
It's the same thing... I'm still going easy on him...
... No.

HE REALLY IS IMPATIENT.
YEAH, HE'S IMPATIENT, ALRIGHT.
HE'S ALREADY STARTING ON HIS SELF-DESTRUCTIVE PATTERN.
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, MR. MIZUSHIMA!?
UNNNGH... HE'S LATE!!
TOO LATE!!


NO, NEVER MIND HIS FAMILY!
WHAT ABOUT HIS FAMILY!?
NEVER MIND HIM!
WHAT ABOUT HIS OPPONENT!?
BUT HE DOESN'T ACTUALLY HAVE TO RISK HIS OWN LIFE FOR IT!!
I UNDERSTAND THAT HE LOVES PING-PONG!! I FEEL THE SAME WAY MYSELF!!

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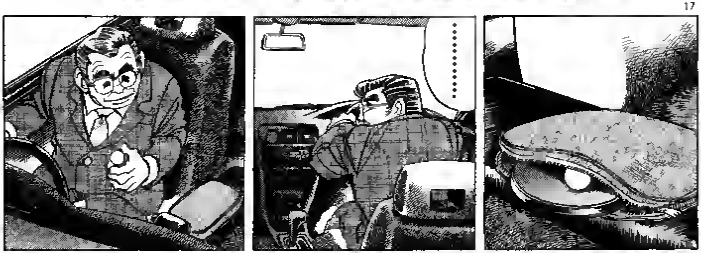

YOU MADE IT, MIZUSHIMA!!
YOU KEPT ME WAITING LONG ENOUGH!!
JUST LIKE WOMEN TREASURE JEWELS...
THERE ARE SOME THINGS MEN JUST CAN'T GIVE UP...!!
HUH?

W-WAIT A MINUTE. SO AM I...!!
H..HE SEEMS DIFFERENT FROM USUAL...
Y... YEAH! I WON'T BE LOSING TODAY!!
SHALL WE GET TO IT, MR. AIZAWA?
THIS IS THE LAST GAME OF PING-PONG YOU'LL PLAY FOR A WHILE.
CALM DOWN, AIZAWA. STAY COMPOSED.
DON'T RUSH IT, AND DON'T GET SLOPPY!!!
SO PLAY A GAME YOU WON'T REGRET.
19
OKAY.
.....

A JEWEL!
THE VALUE OF A JEWEL IS IN NOT ONLY ITS BEAUTY, BUT ITS UNCHANGING COLOR AND ITS HARDNESS...
THE FIRST CONDITION FOR A JEWEL TO BE VALUABLE IS FOR IT TO "NEVER CHANGE"!!
SOMETHING THAT WILL NEVER CHANGE, NO MATTER WHAT KIND OF FORCE IS EXERTED ON IT... THAT KIND OF PING-PONG!!
THAT'S THE KIND OF PING-PONG THAT I WILL FACE MR. AIZAWA WITH!
...WHICH MEANS...
THAT THE GREATEST FAVOR I CAN DO HIM IS TO BEAT HIM BEYOND RECOVERY!!

M-MY BODY... CAN'T KEEP UP WITH THIS...!!
IT'S HOPE-LESS!!
I-I CAN'T SCORE ON HIM...!
I DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO KEEP RALLYING... I HAVE TO END THIS AT ONCE...
AT ONCE !!
WHILE I STILL HAVE THE STRENGTH FOR IT!!

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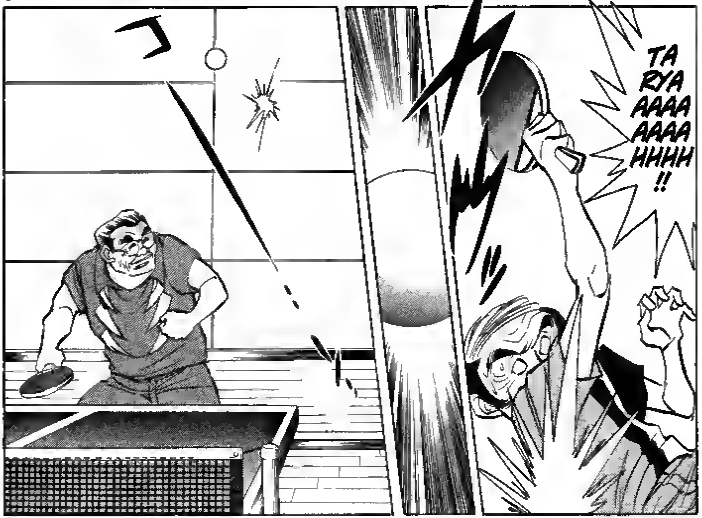
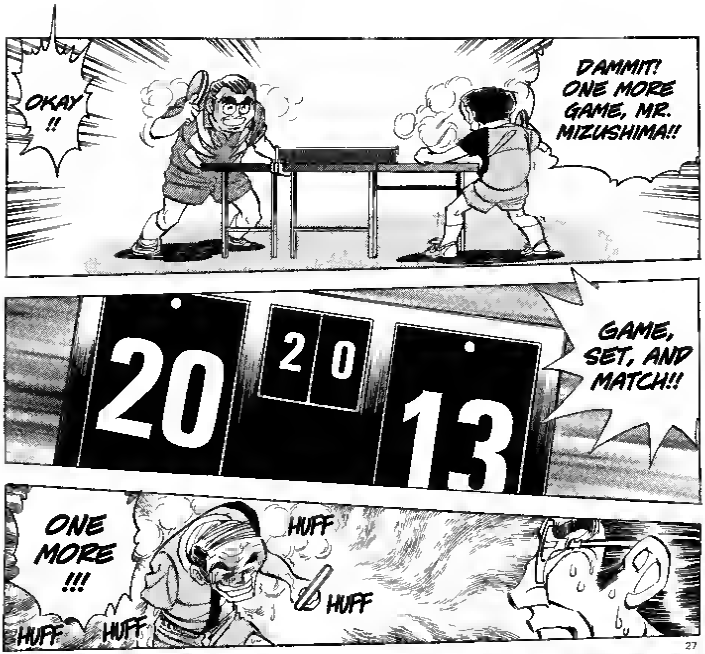
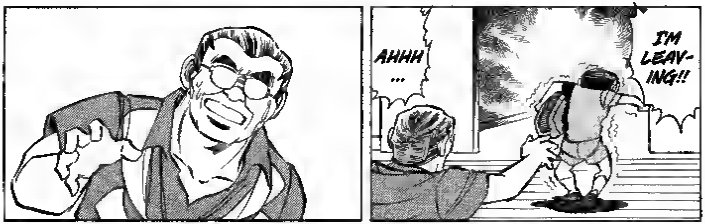


DWALYE EEEEEEE HHHHHHH HHHHHH!!
25
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
!

KCH...
MR. AIZAWA'S GETTING SLOPPY!!
OH, NO!!
IS IT REALLY RIGHT FOR A HUMAN BEING TO BE IMITATING A MERE MINERAL...?
HUFF HUFF
HUFF HUFF
NO MATTER HOW VALUABLE A JEWEL IS, IT'S JUST A JEWEL...
I...IS THIS REALLY ALRIGHT ...?
HUFF
20
20
11
MIZUSHIMA
AIZAWA
GAME, SET, AND MATCH !!

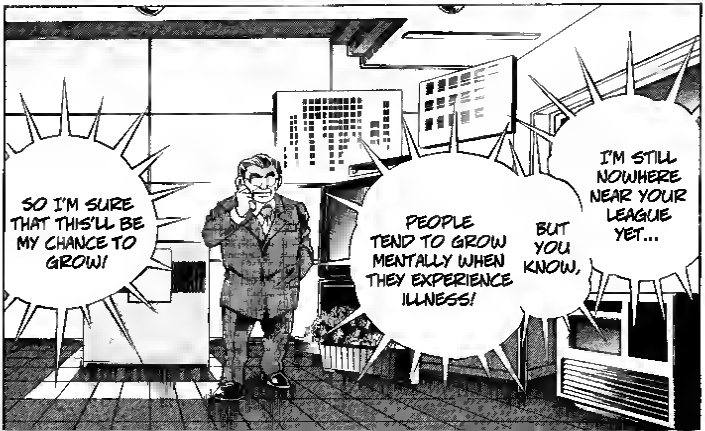

OKAY !!
DAMMIT! ONE MORE GAME, MR. MIZUSHIMA!!
20
20
13
GAME, SET, AND MATCH!!
ONE MORE !!!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
27
GAME, SET, AND MATCH!!
20
20
8
T.. THIS HAS GONE FROM BAD TO WORSE!!
.....

I'M SICK OF THIS!!
WA AAA AAA UG H!!
W...

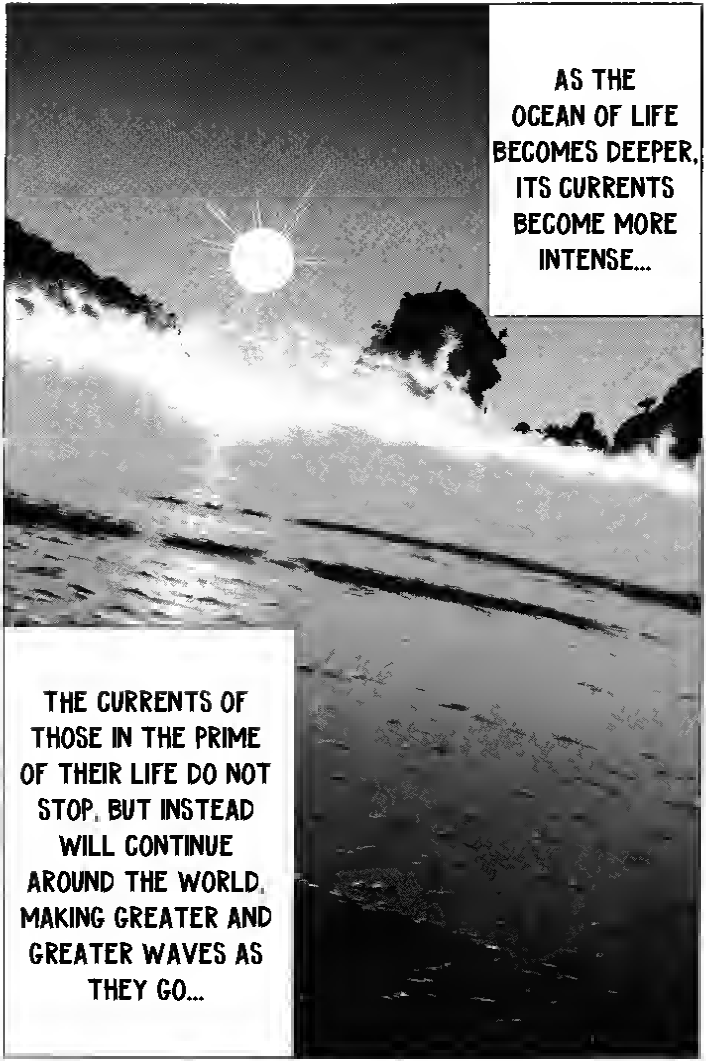

AHHH ...
I'M LEAV- ING!!

.....

LATER...
I'M SORRY I PUT YOU IN A DIFFICULT SPOT LIKE THAT, MR. MIZUSHIMA...
ALTHOUGH I WON'T BE ABLE TO PLAY PING-PONG FOR A WHILE.
BUT I'M FINE. THE OPERATION WENT WELL.


I'M STILL NOWHERE NEAR YOUR LEAGUE YET...
BUT YOU KNOW,
PEOPLE TEND TO GROW MENTALLY WHEN THEY EXPERIENCE ILLNESS!
SO I'M SURE THAT THIS'LL BE MY CHANCE TO GROW!

I GUESS THAT MEANS THAT NEXT TIME I PLAY YOU, I MIGHT HAVE A CHANCE!!
JUST LOOK FORWARD TO IT!!
.....
THIS MAN...
IS 57 YEARS OLD, AND STILL OPTIMISTIC !!
THANK GOOD-NESS!
SOMEHOW, EVERYTHING TURNED OUT OKAY.


AS THE OCEAN OF LIFE BECOMES DEEPER, ITS CURRENTS BECOME MORE INTENSE...
THE CURRENTS OF THOSE IN THE PRIME OF THEIR LIFE DO NOT STOP, BUT INSTEAD WILL CONTINUE AROUND THE WORLD, MAKING GREATER AND GREATER WAVES AS THEY GO...
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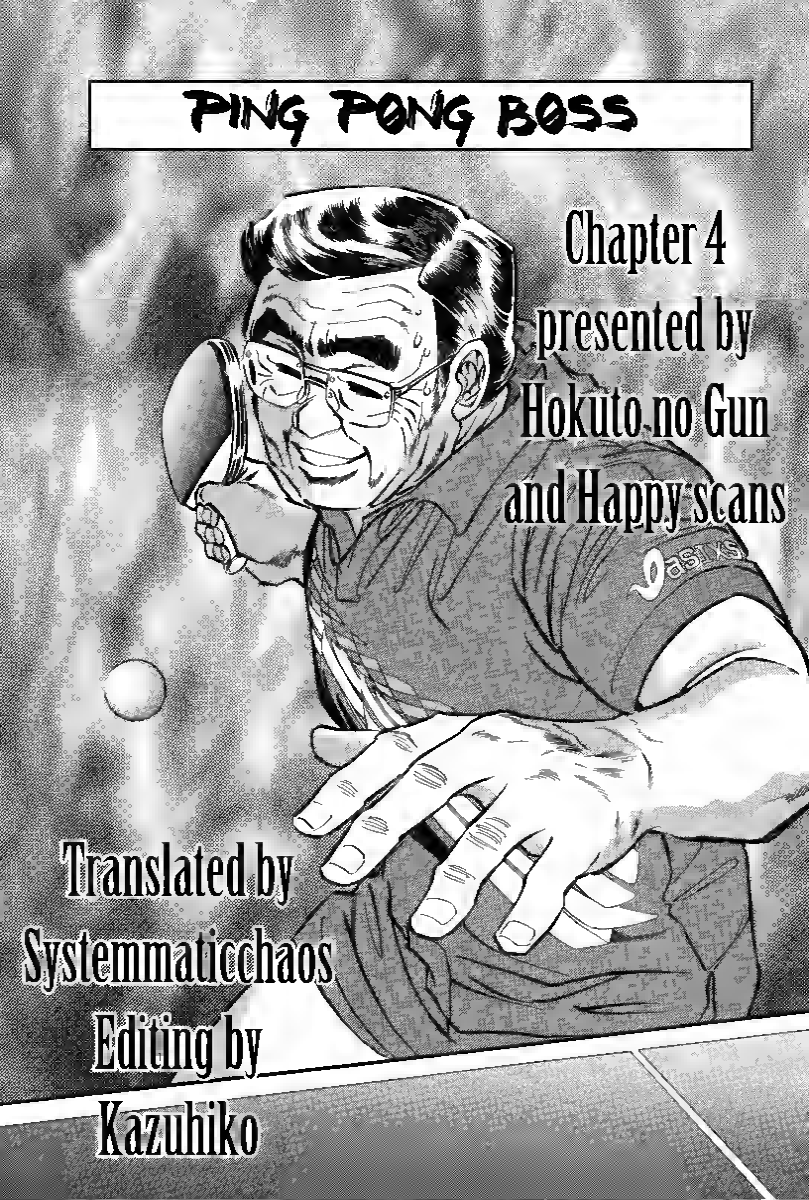
PING PONG BOSS



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